



Submission for Future Policing

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About us

In May 1999 the community policing forum was set up as a pilot to tackle the drugs crisis in the north east inner city at a time when, reflecting the strained relationship between the Gardaí and local community, a credible local and community acceptable forum was needed to act as an intermediary between the parties.

The aims of the forum to:

- To ensure that the law is effectively enforced against those involved in the supply and trafficking of illegal drugs and harmful drugs.
- To reduce local fears and address concerns in relation to drug pushing and associated anti-social behaviour
- To improve communication between the Community and the Gardaí in relation to drug pushing and associated anti-social behaviour.
- To assist in the resolution of difficulties between the Gardaí and the Community in relation to drug pushing and associated anti-social behaviour.
- To improve communication between Dublin City Council and Tenants and Residents and to encourage the development of new Tenant's and Residents
- To promote community development, particularly in relation to the drug problem and to improve the quality of life for local residents.

That the community policing forum has succeeded in real terms in addressing its objectives has been acknowledged regularly in the intervening years, not least in successive government's National Drugs Strategy.

The Board of the forum is strongly of the view that the Community Policing Forum model remains as relevant today as it was at its establishment in 1999.

The Community Policing Forum is a community-led response to address the issues of drug dealing and antisocial behaviour. Twenty-eight local committees representing residents of flat complexes and streets in the North East Inner City meet to address issues as they arise. These meetings are attended by representatives of An Gardaí Síochána and Dublin City Council, at which measures are agreed to tackle the issues of concern. The intention is that once issues are raised at these local meetings, appropriate action will be taken to address them. Full Forum meetings are ideally held every three months in Store Street Gardaí Station, with representatives from the local committees attending, along with senior members of the Gardaí, DCC and public representatives.

The Board of the Community Policing Forum would propose that this model be accepted as a template to inform the development of policy in terms of Gardaí/ Community policing at each district/ sub-district area.

We are of the view that unless the work of such fora are underpinned by formal policy, the success or failure of the forum model may rest on the informal approach which has informed much of the community policing initiatives which have been unsuccessfully attempted in recent years. With this in mind, we would propose the following:

1. Dedicated community policing units should be established which will communicate and work very closely with the local Community Policing Forum. Selected Gardaí should be interviewed for such units to ensure they are suitable for this type of work.
2. A minimum of a 5-year tenure in such units would be beneficial to all stakeholders to ensure continuity of service.
3. Promotions with a clear career path should be possible which sees Gardaí who are successful in the work being promoted and still remaining within community policing. This is essential to make community policing work and be sustainable.
4. Increase numbers of Gardaí, insofar as possible, to patrol on bicycles to keep up with the dealers who control the drug dealing on bicycles.
5. Strict policies, procedures and practices should be implemented which are consistent with the aims of the forum. These should explicitly require the buy-in of senior Gardaí and local authority management and officials.
6. Gardaí should work in an integrated way with all stakeholders, especially local community residents, local project & services also including social protection, health services, family and children services, local schools, youth services, GYD projects, probation and Local & Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Forces though others should be included as necessary.
7. Specifically, in respect of the north east inner-city area of Dublin, we propose that a welcoming community space for meetings is included in the refurbished Fitzgibbon St Station to be made available to the Community Policing Forum.
8. Engage with key stakeholders to devise innovative ways to repond to the ever-changing drugs market and related intimidation particularly within disadvantage areas and those many vulnerable families.
9. The need to further develop pioneering work of the pilot `ethnic policing forum` between Gardaí Síochána, NEIC Community Policing Forum & `Voice of New Communities`